

# Planning, Parks, & Development

Summary

	2007/08 Actual	2008/09 Current	2009/10 Requested	2009/10 Approved	Percent Change
<b>Revenues</b>					
Charges & Fees	\$105,876	\$86,520	\$316,973	\$129,473	50%
State	0	0	5,750	5,750	100%
Miscellaneous	318	800	500	500	-38%
From Other Parks	0	0	0	0	0%
From Community Development	11,479	0	0	0	0%
General Fund	743,493	940,110	953,029	848,385	-10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$861,166</b>	<b>\$1,027,430</b>	<b>\$1,276,252</b>	<b>\$984,108</b>	<b>-4%</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Personal Services	\$657,872	\$771,290	\$796,409	\$769,497	-0.2%
Supplies & Operations	190,137	245,640	444,993	214,611	-13%
Capital	13,157	10,500	34,850	0	-100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$861,166</b>	<b>\$1,027,430</b>	<b>\$1,276,252</b>	<b>\$984,108</b>	<b>-4%</b>
<b>Expenses by Division</b>					
Planning & Zoning	\$613,244	\$679,056	\$881,902	\$628,240	-7%
Parks	247,922	348,374	394,350	355,868	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>861,166</b>	<b>1,027,430</b>	<b>1,276,252</b>	<b>984,108</b>	<b>-4%</b>
<b>Employees</b>					
Permanent	11.00	12.00	12.00	12.00	0%
Hourly	1.00	4.40	2.40	2.40	-45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.00</b>	<b>16.40</b>	<b>14.40</b>	<b>14.40</b>	<b>-12%</b>

## Budget Highlights

The Planning, Parks, and Development budget includes County Planning and Zoning efforts and the operation of County Parks. Planning and Zoning saw large increases in demand in some program areas and decreases in others tied to the economy in Fiscal Year 2008/09. Inquiries regarding small business permits increased 166% due to citizens obtaining information on how to start a business on her/his own property while permit processing and approvals for rezoning, subdivision plats, variances, special use permits, and other general zoning authorization permits decreased roughly 55%. Due to the reduction in permit revenue received, part-time wages were eliminated from the budget.

The budget includes a reduction in the cell tower Co-Location/Modification Review fee from \$10,000 to \$2,500. In the past, a private consultant was contracted to inspect existing towers prior to the issuance of a co-location permit. Part of the inspection process is to ensure the tower's structural integrity. Existing towers have already been inspected and certified as structurally sound by professional engineers so this was seen as an unnecessary redundancy. Planning staff will now do any necessary field work to process the application. By enacting this

change, it will lower costs for the cell tower operators and make the process a little more efficient. The fee change is estimated to give the department an extra \$25,000 in revenue in the upcoming fiscal year because Planning will realize the entire \$2,500 fee for each co-location/modification review rather than splitting the higher fee with the consultant.

The Parks Division has had a busy year with Bakers Mountain Park and Riverbend Park now open six instead of four days a week and the opening of the St. Stephens Community Park four days a week. Park attendance has increased 19% from last year. As a result of the additional hours and the new park, the Parks Division has been given additional funds for part-time (\$9,408) and overtime (\$4,500) wages.

## **PLANNING & ZONING**

### **Statement of Purpose**

Conduct a comprehensive planning program, including the administration of the Unified Development Ordinance, which is designed to promote and maintain the orderly physical growth and development of Catawba County which serves to improve the quality of life for its citizens and provide economic development within the County. Facilitate and provide staff support for the development of short and long-range planning initiatives with subsequent implementation of the plan's policies and recommendations. Provide information and consultation on matters of planning and development to the Board of Commissioners, Planning Board, Board of Adjustment, Subdivision Review Board, Parks Advisory Committee, County departments, development community, and general public.

### **Outcomes**

1. Provide quality customer service by expeditiously and accurately reviewing development-related requests/projects through the completion of the following:
  - a. Processing of all rezoning requests and preparation of report(s) and recommendation(s) for submittal to the Planning Board 7-10 days prior to the scheduled public hearing. Recommendations from the Planning Board to the Board of Commissioners will be forwarded after the public hearing.
  - b. Reviewing and approving of complete non-residential site plans within 10 working days by independently reviewing plans and serving as a member of a technical review team to comprehensively review non-residential site plans and coordinate comments.
  - c. Reviewing and approving of completed applications for residential zoning permits in coordination with the Permit Center for questionable situations (i.e. floodplain, topography, setback issues) within two working days.
  - d. Reviewing of special use, variance and nonconforming applications with submittal of staff reports to the Board of Adjustment within 45 days of receipt of complete application.
  - e. Reviewing of preliminary and final major subdivision plats and field checking final subdivisions for drainage, street layout, and other required improvements as specified in the Unified Development Ordinance within 10 working days of application date and providing reports to the Subdivision Review Board.
  - f. Reviewing of minor and family subdivision plans to ensure compliance with the Unified Development Ordinance within 10 working days.
2. Ensure management and elected officials have the necessary background, technical reports and staff recommendations to make informed decisions on planning matters by completing the following:

- a. Serving on boards established to improve transportation and transit in the County. Board membership includes: Metropolitan Planning Organization, Rural Planning Organization, Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority (alternate), Transportation Advisory committee, the Comprehensive Transportation Plan Steering Committee, and the Lake Norman Regional Bicycle Plan Steering Committee.
  - b. Serving on boards and committees established to improve environmental quality and quality of life in the County in order to promote tourism and economic development. Board and committee membership includes: the Catawba River Study Committee, Catawba-Wateree Relicensing Coalition, Lake Norman Marine Commission, Foothills Conservancy, Carolina Thread Trail Advisory Council, Unifour Recreation and Open Space Task Force/Subcommittees, Unifour Air Quality Committee, CONNECT Regional Environmental Cabinet, Green Initiatives.
  - c. Ensuring that appropriate agencies have current information on school capacity based on new subdivision lots approved through the submittal of annual reports to appropriate agencies and elected officials. This information is used in part to establish priorities for future school additions or new construction. In addition, planning information will be shared in order to provide a greater range of school expansion and siting decisions, such as a community-oriented school approach.
3. Provide additional levels of public safety, reduce property loss, and minimize community disruption from the effects of natural hazards by updating the County's Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan. An updated plan will also evaluate the opportunity to maximize the Community Rating System credit points under the National Flood Insurance Program, which could potentially help lower flood insurance rates for citizens in the County. The updated plan will be submitted to the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management (NCDEM) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for conditional approval, subject to final adoption by the Board of Commissioners, prior to expiration of the 5-year mandatory update deadline in April 2010.
4. Increase affordable housing opportunities and ensure safe housing for low-to-moderate income persons by administering the following grants, with assistance by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG):
  - a. Scattered Site CDBG – rehabilitate 6-9 substandard units owned by low/moderate income elderly homeowners through a \$400,000 grant.
  - b. Urgent Repair CDBG - provide minor repair for 16 housing units owned by low/moderate income elderly homeowners through a \$75,000 grant.
  - c. Individual Development Account (IDA) CDBG - provide down-payment assistance to 5 first-time homeowners through a \$70,000 grant for the Unifour.
  - d. Community Stabilization Program – provide assistance to first-time homebuyers in purchasing foreclosed houses through a \$5 million grant to the County.

5. Improve quality of life opportunities for County citizens, promote tourism and economic development, and retain segments of rural character and wildlife habitat in the County as identified during the community-based small area planning and the Parks Master Plan through the preservation of natural areas in the County. This will be achieved by completing the following:
  - a. Coordinating with the Foothills and Catawba Lands Conservancies to identify potential preservation areas on the Jacobs Fork River, Catawba River and/or sites near the County's parks for consideration of acquisition or conservation easements through grants.
  - b. Pursuing funding for acquisition, design and construction of improvements to the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge site.
  - c. Monitoring the recreational offerings contained in Duke Energy's Comprehensive Relicensing Agreement to ensure that the terms of the agreement are completed in the time prescribed.
  - d. Coordinating with local conservancies and other organizations to identify grant sources to acquire/develop the recreational offerings contained in Duke Energy's Comprehensive Relicensing Agreement.
  - e. Implementing recommendations of the County's Parks Master Plan and the Greater Hickory Recreation/Tourism Plan.
  - f. Facilitating a public planning process for the location of the Carolina Thread Trail segment(s) within the County, which will result in the development of a final plan to be submitted for adoption by the Board of Commissioners by the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of Fiscal Year 2009/10.
  - g. Finalizing the acquisition of the 600-acre Mountain Creek tract on Lake Norman and conducting public meetings to obtain citizen input on the development of passive recreation opportunities at the new Mountain Creek Park.
6. Ensure that the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) is a user-friendly document for the development community by completing the following:
  - a. Finalizing a landscape design manual and updating the design manual, which will assist developers in complying with the ordinance.
  - b. Conducting specialized workshops to educate design professionals on the requirements of the UDO.
7. Assist the U.S. Census Bureau in obtaining an accurate population count for Catawba County during its decennial 2010 census in order to receive equitable Federal monies for government-supported programs and provide accurate demographic data for planning purposes. The planning department will cooperate with the U.S. Census Bureau in its Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program through the evaluation of feedback materials and the processing of appeals identified during the review process. The Planning Department will provide facilitation for a

Complete Count Committee which will promote the census and provide outreach to special population groups to encourage completion of the census forms.

8. Facilitate the improvement of traffic movement on NC Highway 150 by expediting the widening process through the implementation of the Highway 150 Corridor study recommendations, such as pursuing funding for a traffic forecasting study to identify long-range traffic improvements in the corridor. The traffic forecasting study will be complete by the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of Fiscal Year 2009/10 if funding is available. The remaining implementation strategies will be a multi-year process.
9. Facilitate a planning process to identify additional economic opportunities which will provide additional jobs and tax revenue in the County by developing the following:
  - a. Highway 16 corridor from the new Highway 16 bypass to the existing Highway 16 up to Mt. Anderson.
  - b. A “green development corridor” around the County’s Eco-Complex and Rocky Ford Road/Highway 321 overpass.

The planning process will involve evaluating current land use plans and regulations which apply to these areas and identifying ways to provide for new economic development opportunities. Due to the economic downturn, this planning process will be completed by staff instead of hiring an outside consultant to facilitate and prepare the plans. Both studies will be complete by the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of FY 2009/10.

10. Provide educational outreach to property owners about farming activities in the County in order to reduce the impacts of conflicting uses through the implementation of the recently adopted Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) program. Planning staff will provide support to the new Voluntary Agricultural Advisory Board who will review applications for individual farmers to participate in a voluntary agricultural district and identify long-range activities to further promote and preserve farmland in the County.
11. Ensure that the quality of life amenities and safety improvements, which are required of Crescent Resources and Key Harbor as part of the executed development agreement, are completed through the monitoring by planning staff to ensure compliance with the agreement. Planning staff will coordinate with Utilities and Engineering on tracking the sewer payback schedule. Also, as developers begin to bring the projects on-line, staff will ensure that detailed site plans are prepared which comply with the terms of the development agreement.
12. Improve customer service by providing user-friendly, accurate information to the public regarding planning functions and activities through the maintenance of the Planning Department web site. The updated web site will provide information on new developments, links to application forms and basic information about permitting requirements and standards.

## **PARKS**

### **Statement of Purpose**

Provide recreational opportunities for the citizens of Catawba County through the operation and development of parks and the preservation of open space. Environmental education and the preservation of Catawba County's unique natural heritage are the primary goals of the Parks Division.

### **Outcomes**

1. Increase the Parks Division daily attendance average by 10% as evidenced by traffic counter statistics/sign-in sheets and the quarterly Parks Division reports. This will be achieved by ensuring that 98% of all prescribed daily maintenance and operational duties are preformed satisfactorily as evidenced by inspection by the Parks Manager. Attendance will also be increased by the individual efforts of all Park staff to fully explore and execute all available resources relating to the public media and scheduled public events hosted by the Parks Division. The daily attendance log indicating such events will evidence this. Particular effort will be placed on outreach to civic, volunteer, and educational organizations. These organizations will include such groups as Girl and Boy Scouts, Church Groups, YMCA, Non-profits, and educational institutions such as North Carolina Public Schools, Catawba Valley Community College, Catawba County Schools, and Lenoir Rhyne College.
2. Achieve 500 volunteer labor hours by completing a minimum of 4 parks improvement projects. The primary goal of this outcome is to promote civic and environmental stewardship education while reducing operating cost and further developing the goals regarding the preservation of Catawba County Park's facilities. The secondary goal of these improvement projects will be environmental/interpretive education and community involvement. In an effort to involve youth, these projects will include school and scouting groups when possible. This will be completed as evidenced by the volunteer/project log, sign-in sheets, and the quarterly Parks Division report.
3. Host educational/interpretive programs with no less than 800 patron participants as evidenced by daily sign-in sheets. The goal of these programs is to share environmental/interpretive information with the public in an effort to broaden public awareness and participation in the preservation of Catawba County's unique natural heritage.
4. The Parks staff will assist in the development of a grant application for the proposed Mountain Creek Park. Staff will begin making plans for the initial development of the site as prescribed by the Catawba County Parks Master Plan.